

South Central MIRECC Communiqué

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“Closing the efficacy-effectiveness gap”

Taking It to the Streets: Use of the Internet for Promoting and Disseminating MIRECC Information

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The promotion and dissemination of new clinical findings and best practices information is a key function of the South Central MIRECC. There are many ways to do this, and we want to make sure that you know and use one such method: the SC MIRECC Internet site <www.va.gov/scmirecc>. Internet web sites are an excellent entree to the general public and to the subset of people searching for what you (the MIRECC affiliate) have to offer. As with most Internet sites, ours requires a dynamic effort to continually update the content. We do this to accommodate *what is needed* and *what is requested*. These are two distinct tasks.

The most obvious expression of *accommodating a need* is provision of information to our stakeholders: veterans and caregivers, as well as providers and professionals. Harris Poll #63 (2004) reports that 73% of U.S. adults have access to the Internet, 63% from the home. Poll #21 (2001) notes that 80% of online adults use the Internet to search for health care information. The SC MIRECC Internet site provides veterans and caregivers with access to over 20 clinical education products appropriate for laypersons, links to other mental health sites, a multimedia decision-making tool for potential research subjects, and a mechanism for submitting questions to the clinical experts. Links to other mental health sites include those developed by SC MIRECC affiliates, such as the “Best Practice in Family Intervention” <<http://w3.ouhsc.edu/bpfamily/>>. We also share links with other MIRECC sites and the national MIRECC web site <<http://www.mirecc.med.va.gov>>.

Offering information that providers and professionals need is the flip side of this coin. We recognize the value of being a source for current information, as well as a location for archived materials. The SC MIRECC web site posts Current Events and past SC MIRECC newsletters. Research, education, and clinical activities are highlighted, with links to current initiatives, funding opportunities, training opportunities, and past successes. Soon we will have clinical education products available for direct downloading, and new pages are being developed for the various training and research programs. A simple search engine allows you to find specific information in our web site meeting keyword criteria.

Accommodating what is requested is the most rewarding part of running a web site. Our intention to use this web site to “close the efficacy-effectiveness gap” is valuable only if there is a demand for what we offer. This is where **you** play a direct role in making the SC MIRECC web site useful. Your comments offer us the highest yield of all sources of feedback. E-mail messages suggesting a simple link or an expansion of functionality always ring true and are much appreciated. Moreover, the site is open to your contributions of an article, a page, or a product. Let me offer an example. The page at <http://www.va.gov/SCMIRECC/absolutenm/templates/professional_template.asp?articleid=41&zoneid=3> displays a table listing “Team & Theme Leaders.” Drs. Sherman and Sautter asked for additional links here

to provide further details about the Families Theme. Recent publications are listed and an Information Page serves as a reminder of conference call schedules and upcoming events.

You should feel confident that the SC MIRECC web site undergoes routine scrutiny. Web site statistical software, free through VA Central Computing Resources, tells us how this site is being used. We know which pages receive the most attention and how long individuals linger on particular pages, which helps us understand the value of the web site. So far, we have only added new information to meet newly recognized need, but future modifications may warrant pruning pages that are never accessed. We can also analyze the path that users take as they click-through our site. A popular page frequently arrived at via multiple clicks is a candidate for a shortcut, either by placing it higher in the menu schema or by creating a “Related Articles” link. In brief, we use this information to tweak the site to facilitate users’ needs.

Use of the SC MIRECC web site has steadily increased to over 1,400 visits or “hits” per month. Last month, first time web site users accounted for approximately 46% of visits, while those who visited more than once remained steady at 8%. The top pages accessed, besides the “Home page,” are “Funding Opportunities” and the “Clinical Education Grants Program”. Numbers of new and repeat visitors indicate that the web site is serving the needs of our stakeholders. However, we would like to see this number increase by improving the web site to better meet your needs. We encourage each of you to view the site and to give us your feedback and suggestions.

Comments and suggestions can be sent to: Dr. Tom Teasdale at thomas.teasdale@med.va.gov or Dr. Allen Thomas at allen.thomas3@med.va.gov.



Web Presentation: Switching Anti-Depressants

The MIRECC *Bringing Science to Practice* web-based conference series presents **Kimberly Arlinghaus, M.D.**, on “**To Switch or Not to Switch... That is the Question: VISN 16 Task Force on Anti-Depressant Switching**,” **March 17, noon to 1:00 PM CT**. Dr. Arlinghaus is the Mental Health Care Line Deputy Executive and Senior Consultant for Psychiatry at the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center in Houston, Texas. She is an Associate Professor of Psychiatry at the Menninger Department of Psychiatry at Baylor College of Medicine, a Distinguished Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association, and a clinician-educator specializing in consultation-liaison psychiatry, especially the interface between psychiatry and primary care.

The PowerPoint slides for Dr. Arlinghaus’ presentation can be downloaded from a VA-networked computer at <http://vaww.visn16.med.va.gov/mirecc.htm> beginning March 16. The live audioconference can be accessed March 17 at **1-800-767-1750, access code 45566#**. This presentation is accredited for 1.0 hour of discipline-specific continuing education by the VA Employee Education System. For additional information about this program, contact Tonya.welch@med.va.gov



MIRECC Pilot Research Grant Awards

The South Central MIRECC announced funding for four Pilot Research Study Grants during the Spring / Summer 2004 funding cycle. After review of initial Letters of Intent by content experts, several applicants were invited to submit full proposals. After further review and revision, the following investigators were awarded grants:

- **Michelle Sherman, Ph.D.**, (Oklahoma City) – “Key Factors Involved in Engaging Significant Others in the Treatment of Veterans with PTSD”
- **Snigdha Mukherjee, Ph.D.**, (Little Rock) – “The Stigma of Alzheimer’s Disease: The Perception of African American Community Dwelling Patients and Patient Proxies”
- **Gregory Schrimsher, Ph.D.**, (Jackson) – “Relation of Cognitive Status to Substance Use Disorder Treatment Outcome”
- **Kristen Sorocco, Ph.D.**, (Oklahoma City) – “Effectiveness of a Brief Motivational Intervention on Level of Treatment Engagement in Caregiving of Individuals with a Severe Mental Illness”

Congratulations to the grant recipients!

The MIRECC would also like to thank the Pilot Research reviewers for their generous giving of time and constructive advice to applicants: Geoff Curran, Ph.D.; Nancy Jo Dunn, Ph.D.; Ellen Fischer, Ph.D.; Teresa Hudson, PharmD; Maga Jackson-Triche, M.D.; Michael Kauth, Ph.D.; JoAnn Kircher, M.D.; Lauren Marangell, M.D.; Richard Owen, M.D.; Jefferson Parker, Ph.D.; Jose Pena, M.D.; Lynn Snow, Ph.D.; Madeline Uddo, Ph.D.; and Jennifer Vasterling, Ph.D.

For more information about the MIRECC Pilot Research Study Program, please contact Dr. Vasterling at Jennifer.vasterling@med.va.gov

VISN 16 Task Force on Anti-Depressant Switching

The VISN 16 Task Force will report its recommendations on anti-depressant switching on a web-based presentation **March 17 at noon CT**. The call in number is 800-767-1750, access code 45566#. The PowerPoint presentation can be downloaded from the VA intranet beginning the day before the presentation at <http://vaww.visn16.med.va.gov/mirecc.htm>. Kimberly Arlinghaus, M.D., will present the Task Force findings. See the web-based presentation publicized in this issue for more information.

Science News

Abstracts

Vasterling JJ, Duke LM, Tomlin H, Lowrey N, Kaplan E: Global-local visual processing in posttraumatic stress disorder. *Journal of the International Neuropsychological Society*, 10, 709-718, 2004.

The purpose of this study was to examine a behavioral index of hemispheric asymmetry (i.e., visual hierarchical attention) in posttraumatic stress

disorder (PTSD), a disorder characterized by anxiety and other emotional symptoms. A reaction time based, computerized, global-local visual paradigm was administered to 26 PTSD-diagnosed and 22 psychopathology-free right-handed, male Vietnam War zone veterans. Results indicated that PTSD-diagnosed veterans displayed slower reaction times to all targets than the no-mental disorders comparison sample. However, findings also revealed a Group x Target location interaction in which the PTSD group was slower than the

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no-disorders comparison sample to respond to local, but not global, targets. Moreover, relative global bias was greater among PTSD-diagnosed veterans than their no-diagnosis counterparts. Findings provide partial support for the hypothesis that PTSD may be associated with a functional cerebral asymmetry favoring the right hemisphere.

Galovski T, **Lyons JA**: Psychological sequelae of combat violence: A review of the impact of PTSD on the veteran's family and possible interventions. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 9, 477-501, 2004.

This review of the literature reveals that veterans' posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) following exposure to combat violence affects veterans' familial relationships and the psychological adjustment of family members. Previous study within other trauma populations has conceptualized the negative impact of an individual's traumatic stress on his / her family members as "secondary

traumatization". This review examines the processes by which secondary traumatization occurs within combat veterans' families. Research has identified PTSD as mediating the effect of veterans' combat experience on the family. Veterans' numbing / arousal symptoms are especially predictive of family distress; while, to a lesser extent, veterans' anger is also associated with troubled family relationships and secondary traumatization among family members. Empirical modeling of additional factors involved in secondary traumatization is needed. Marital / family interventions have largely focused on improving relationships and reducing veterans' symptoms, rather than targeting improvements in the psychological well-being of the spouse and children. Interventions directly addressing the needs of significant others, especially spouses, are advocated. The potential for increased effectiveness of PTSD interventions and possible cost-savings attained by improving relationships and reducing caregiver burden are also discussed.



March Conference Calls 1-800-767-1750

- 7—Education Core, 2:00 PM CT, access code 16821#
- 7—Schizophrenia Team, 3:00 PM CT, access code 20061#
- 8—Directors Call, 3:00 PM CT, access code 19356#
- 9—Neuroimaging Group, 9:00 AM CT, access code 24394#
- 15—Substance Abuse Team, General, 1:00 PM CT, access code 23400#
- 16—Program Assistants, 2:00 PM CT, access code 43593#
- 21—Disorder Team Leaders, 2:00 PM CT, access code 20143#
- 22—Directors Call, 3:00 PM CT, access code 19356#
- 28—PRECEP Call, 11:00 AM CT, access code 39004#

The next issue of the *South Central MIRECC Communiqué* will be published April 4, 2005. Deadline for submission of items to the April newsletter is March 29. Urgent items may be submitted for publication in the *Communiqué Newsflash* at any time. Email items to the Editor, Michael R. Kauth, Ph.D., at Michael.Kauth@med.va.gov or FAX to (504) 585-2954.

South Central MIRECC Internet site: www.va.gov/scmirecc/

SC MIRECC intranet site: vaww.vish16.med.va.gov/mirecc.htm

National MIRECC Internet site: www.mirecc.med.va.gov